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Ewing, Thomas.

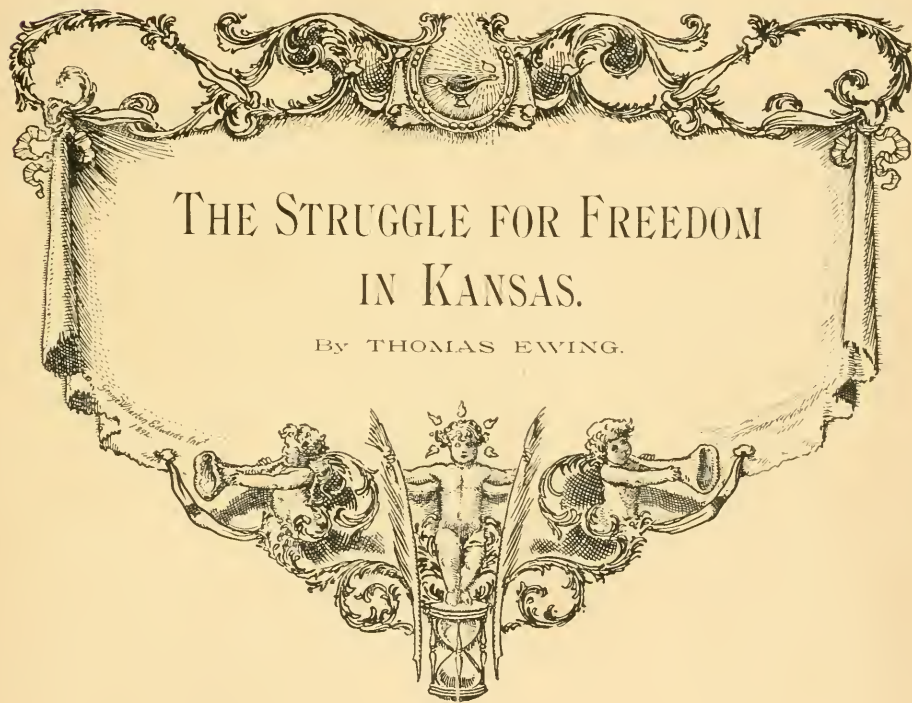
The struggle for freedom in
Kansas.

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Magazine of May, 1894.]



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THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM
IN KANSAS.

By THOMAS EWING.

REPRINTED FROM THE COSMOPOLITAN MAGAZINE OF MAY, 1894.

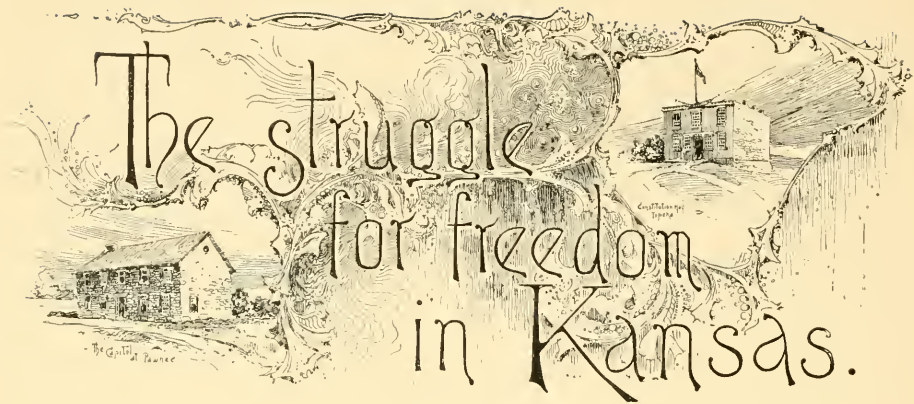
COMPLIMENTS OF

THOMAS EWING,

41 WALL STREET,

NEW YORK CITY.

FROM THE
COSMOPOLITAN PRESS



BY THOMAS EWING.

IN February, 1854, I sat in the gallery of the Senate chamber at Washington, and heard much of the debate on the bill to repeal the Missouri compromise of 1820. I was then about completing my collegiate course in Brown university, at Providence, Rhode Island. Four years before, I had sat in the gallery of the old Senate chamber, now the Supreme Court room, in company with Captain William Tecumseh Sherman (then in Washington from the Pacific coast, and about to be married), and heard that ever memorable debate which ended in the compromises of 1850, growing out of our vast accessions of territory from Mexico, and in the enactment of the cruel and barbarous fugitive slave law. I was intensely anti-slavery,—far more so than my Whig training would account for. I was hot with indignation at the Whig leaders who supported the repeal of the Missouri compromise, or acquiesced in it, or resisted it but feebly. I recollect my pang of disappointment at the labored speech against the bill of Edward Everett, who was regarded as representing the conservative Whigs. It was so cool, didactic, elegant, without a glow of the indignant spirit of the North which blazed in the hearts of the people.

The gauge thrown down by the South to fight for the possession of the territories was promptly taken up; and Kansas became the battle-ground. While studying law at Cincinnati, I watched every step in the struggle,—saw how the genius

and energy of Eli Thayer taught the North to win Kansas for freedom by organized emigration, against the sporadic hordes from the populous borders of Missouri who poured over the line to plant slavery there. When admitted to the bar in the winter of 1856-7, I was married, and removed with my wife to Leavenworth.

On the seventh of October, 1854, Andrew H. Reeder had arrived at Fort Leavenworth—the first of the ten governors, and acting governors, Reeder, Shannon, Geary, Walker, Denver, Medary, Woodson, Stanton, Walsh and Beebe, whose brief careers form part of the tragic history of Kansas.

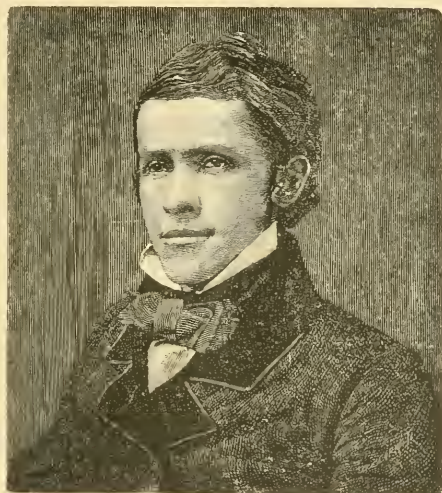
The pro-slavery partisans of western Missouri, as soon as the Organic Act was passed, invaded Kansas at the first election in the fall of 1854, and again at the second election in the spring of 1855; and although few of them intended to become settlers, they took possession of the polls and returned the pro-slavery candidates for the territorial legislature as having been elected. The first legislature assembled at Pawnee, near Fort Riley, July 2, 1855—very promptly ejected nine Free State men, who had been inadvertently returned as elected; enacted all the general laws of Missouri, modified so as to be applicable to Kansas; and crowned their work by enacting a complete slave code, specially invented for the occasion—requiring every territorial officer to swear to support the fugitive slave law; making it a felony, punishable with two

years' imprisonment, to write or say that slavery did not legally exist in Kansas; a felony, punishable with five years' imprisonment, to bring into the Territory or circulate any printed matter calculated to create dissatisfaction among slaves; and finally, making it a felony, punishable with death, to interfere knowingly, in any manner, with the tenure of slave property.

The Free State men, outraged by the forcible seizure of the territorial government by mere invaders, and by the atrocious character of the laws enacted, peremptorily and unanimously repudiated this government as a lawless usurpation. They held a delegate convention at Topeka, September 19, 1855, and there provided for the election of members of a convention to form a State constitution and apply for admission into the Union. The delegates so elected assembled at Topeka, October 23, 1855, and sat until November 11th. They formed the Topeka constitution which was ratified by an almost unanimous vote of the Free State men of Kansas, and was by petition duly laid be-



THOMAS EWING, JR.,
AGE 22.



Engraved by DeP'Orme.
THOMAS EWING, JR.,
AGE 26.

fore Congress. A bill was passed by the United States House of Representatives July 3, 1856, admitting Kansas into the Union under this constitution, but it was defeated in the Senate, and no further action was taken on it in Congress. This constitution, however, and the State officers and legislature elected under it, formed the nucleus and rallying ground for the Free State party, as

against the usurped Lecompton territorial government, until the election in October, 1857, when the overwhelming numbers of the Free State men enabled them to elect a large majority of the legislature under the Lecompton territorial government, which thereupon became universally recognized as the law-making power of the people. The Topeka form of State government then quietly passed out of even nominal existence.

Prior to this, on the nineteenth of February, 1856, the pro-slavery territorial legislature had enacted a law providing for the election of a State convention, which assembled on the seventh day of September, 1857, and formed what was known as the Lecompton State constitution. This was submitted to the people for adoption or rejection at an election held December 21, 1857. There was a large majority of qual-



Engraved by G. Kruell.
THOMAS EWING, JR., AGE 55.

THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM IN KANSAS.

ified voters ready and anxious to vote it down. That would have ended slavery in Kansas forever. But the convention had arranged an ingenious and rascally scheme for submission of the constitution in such manner that a majority could not vote it down. Part of the tickets were printed, "For the Constitution, with Slavery," the other part, "For the Constitution, without Slavery." No other votes could be given or counted. All the votes cast were for the adoption of the constitution; and even if the constitution should be adopted without slavery, the slaves then in the Territory, and their children, were to remain slaves for life.

As the time approached for this election a Free State delegate convention was called and held at Lawrence, December 2, 1857, "to take into consideration the present political situation of the Territory." It resolved unanimously that everything connected with the Lecompton constitution was a swindle, and that the people could gain nothing by participating in the election on the adoption of the constitution. So that election went by default in favor of the pro-slavery party. The votes stood, for the constitution, with slavery, 6143 (a large part of which votes were fraudulent), and for the constitution, without slavery, 569. Three thousand and twelve of this vote were returned from three precincts—Oxford, Shawnee, and Kickapoo,—which everybody knew had not combined a voting population of three hundred—the two precincts first mentioned being in the Shawnee Reserve, where there were no white men legally settled.

Then came the election for State officers and legislature under the Lecompton constitution, which had been fixed in the schedule of that instrument to be held on the fourth of January, 1858. The convention of the Free State party, held on the second of December, was re-convened, to assemble in the Congregational church at West Lawrence on the twenty-third of December, to settle the question whether the Free State party should or should not go into the election of officers under the Lecompton constitution, and elect, as they could easily do, Free State executive officers and a Free State legislature.

This was the final crisis in the struggle for freedom in Kansas. If the Free State

men should elect a majority of the State and local officers and of the legislature, under the Lecompton constitution, we would thereby kill that attempted usurpation in Congress, because the South could gain nothing by admitting the State into the Union, with the certainty that the constitution would be immediately amended, prohibiting slavery utterly and forever. While, if the Free State men should refuse to vote, the pro-slavery men would control all departments of the proposed State government, and the State would, in all probability, be admitted under the Lecompton constitution.

The expediency of our electing officers under the Lecompton constitution was obvious to a large majority of the Free State men of Kansas, and was well supported by *The Herald of Freedom*, *The Leavenworth Times*, and other influential newspapers of our party. That policy was also urged on us by many influential friends of free State in and out of Congress—by my father, the Hon. Thomas Ewing, of Ohio, who wrote my elder brother, Hugh Ewing, then in partnership with me in the practice of law at Leavenworth, most strongly insisting that the Free State men in Kansas, who were known to have a large majority in the Territory, should elect the State officers and members of the legislature under the Lecompton constitution, and thus take possession of the government and control it, so as to make Kansas a free State—just as in the then recent October election the Free State men chose the legislature and took possession of the territorial government. The Hon. Salmon P. Chase, then governor of Ohio, wrote an urgent letter to Governor Robinson, advising the voting policy, which, as well as the letter from my father, was read to the convention with great effect. The Hon. Samuel F. Vinton, an eminent member of the House of Representatives from Ohio, wrote a similar letter to me, which I read to the convention, in which he said that if the Free State men should stubbornly and fanatically refuse to adopt this policy, he for one would abandon the struggle in Congress in our behalf.

But that was the path leading to a peaceful solution of the Kansas strife, and many of the most active Free State leaders in Kansas did not want to tread it. They

hoped for armed collisions between the Free State men and the general government, expecting that all of the states would become involved, and that although the North would be in rebellion, and the South would have the prestige and power of the legitimate government, the superior numbers and resources of the North would certainly triumph. John Brown, of Osawatomie, was the inspirer, though not the active leader, of this radical wing of the Free State party. He regarded slavery as a crime, to be expiated in blood, and himself as a chosen instrument of its expiation—"the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." His oft-repeated maxim was, "Without blood there can be no remission." His dream was of the abolition of slavery by Northern bayonets, aided by the torch of the slave. He never doubted that the blacks would rise en masse, as soon as the North should be in the field to support them. He and his influential followers, mostly correspondents of Eastern papers, were, therefore, determined to defeat the proposition to vote for officers under the Lecompton constitution, and were active and enthusiastic in securing control of the convention, held on the twenty-third of December, 1857.

Charles Robinson, who had been chosen governor under the Topeka constitution—a man of great ability, earnestness and honesty of purpose,—presided at this convention and strongly urged the adoption of the voting policy. Most of the recognized leaders of the Free State party supported it—George W. Brown (now of Rockford, Illinois); S. N. Wood, P. C. Schuyler, M. F. Conway, J. P. Root, Robert Morrow, James Davis, S. C. Pomeroy, myself, and others, spoke for that policy. General James H. Lane, who was by many regarded as preëminently the leader of the Free State party, was absent—non-committal—crafty-sick.

For several days preceding the assem-



JAMES H. LANE, IN 1858.

bling of the convention, it was rumored through the Territory that the United States marshal at Fort Scott held a writ, issued out of the District Court there, commanding him to arrest James Montgomery, one of the radical Free State leaders, on an indictment for treason, and that the marshal had been furnished with a posse of two companies of Federal infantry, to enforce obedience to the writ, and was about to set out for Sugar Mound, in Linn county, where Montgomery lived and where several hundred Free State men had assembled to resist and prevent his arrest by force of arms.

The debate in the convention, on the proposition to take part in the election, was protracted throughout the first day, and was very acrimonious and exciting. On the second day, December 24th, the debate went on, and the friends of the voting policy had almost silenced opposition, when "General" E. B. Whitman, one of General Lane's political lieutenants, rode up to the church where the convention was being held, and, dismounting

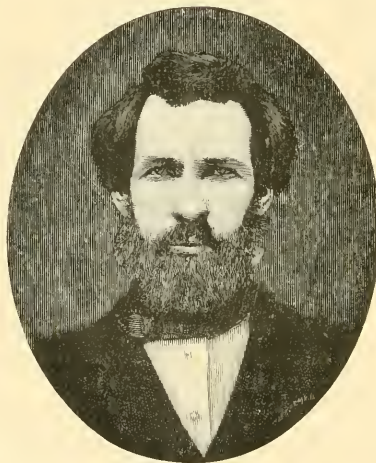
from "his steed of foam," strode into the convention and on to the platform, booted and spurred, "stained with the variation of each soil" 'twixt Sugar Mound and Lawrence, and in a passionate speech declared that he had just ridden eighty miles, from Sugar Mound, without stopping for food or sleep, to call the people of Kansas to arms: that General Lane was in command there, and a desperate battle was impending with the Federal troops. The excitement that followed this announcement was furious and indescribable. I sprang on a table and bitterly denounced the statement as an obvious trick and fraud to control the convention. But the vote was forced at once, and the voting policy was rejected—ayes, sixty-four; noes, seventy-four. The vote was taken by representative districts, and proxies were received; but the vote of persons actually present, stood sixty-four for the voting policy, to sixty-five against it. In the excitement and confusion which followed, the convention adjourned sine die.

While the assemblage was breaking up, I called several friends to accompany me, and hastening to W. Y. Roberts, vice-president of the convention and a strong supporter of the voting policy, we persuaded him to announce to the dispersing crowd that the friends of that policy who were willing to bolt the action of the convention would meet at Masonic Hall on Massachusetts street, at seven o'clock that evening, to nominate a State ticket and organize the Territory for the election. The announcement was received with violent denunciations and yells of dissent. The bolters' meeting, when convened that evening, was broken up by a mob, who put out the lights and forcibly ejected all the bolting delegates from the hall. We re-convened, on the invitation of George W. Brown, in the basement of his *Herald of Freedom* printing-office. Only thirteen bolting delegates appeared, out of sixty-

four, who in the convention supported the voting policy to the last. A Free State ticket was nominated, as follows: for governor, George W. Smith; lieutenant-governor, W. Y. Roberts; secretary of state, P. C. Schuyler; state treasurer, A. J. Meade (now a resident of New York City); state auditor, Joel K. Goodin; representative in Congress, Marcus J. Parrott, who was then delegate in Congress from the Territory—all tried and true Free State men; all pledged, if they should be elected and the State admitted under the Lecompton constitution, to favor an immediate call of a convention, to wipe out every vestige of that odious constitution, and to frame and adopt a new one—a pledge which

was exacted from every Free State candidate, big and little, nominated in the bolting movement.

The next day—Christmas—a large edition of *The Herald of Freedom* was gotten out by George W. Brown, its editor and proprietor—to whose pen and purse, zeal and sense, the Free State cause, from beginning to end of the struggle, was greatly indebted for its triumphs. It was filled with arguments and information in favor



Engraved by Del Orme.
GEORGE W. BROWN, IN 1858.

of our movement, and with tickets for the Free State candidates. I hired every livery-stable horse and rider that could be hired in Lawrence, and had many volunteers, who carried *The Herald of Freedom* post-haste to every considerable settlement in the Territory. It will be considered, I hope, only a pardonable vanity in me to say that I personally expended in the movement over a thousand dollars—being all the money I had or could borrow. We had but nine days in which to organize and conduct the campaign, over a settled territory two hundred miles square, without a railroad.

The pro-slavery men and newspapers fought us fiercely. Fully half of the Free State newspapers supported our movement, but the other half bitterly opposed

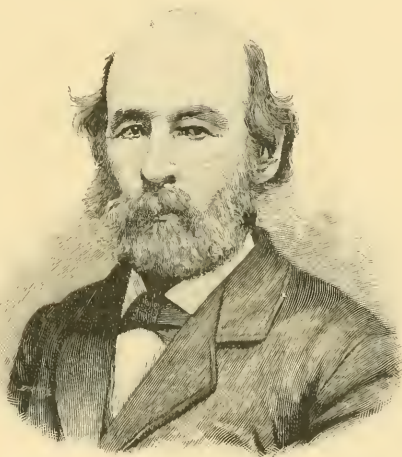
and ridiculed it, calling our voters' assemblage "Brown's cellar-kitchen convention," and calling us all "disappointed, ambitious kickers" and "sore-heads." S. N. Wood, of Council Grove, who had been appointed chairman of the executive committee by the bolters' convention, did great work in organizing and conducting the campaign. Never was there a nine days' canvass conducted over a greater area, under greater difficulties, or more vigorously. The result was watched in Washington and throughout Kansas with breathless interest, as likely to settle forever the vexed Kansas question one way or the other.

At Leavenworth, a town of perhaps four thousand people, the largest in the Territory, the election was regular and the vote full, free and fair on both sides. At Mound City, in Linn county, Montgomery seized and destroyed the ballot-box and broke up the election when about half the votes had been cast. At Sugar Mound, also, the ballot-box was destroyed and the ballots scattered to the winds by a party of Free State men who were hostile to the voting policy; and so, also, at Clinton. In Wabunsee county it was the boast of some of the extreme Free State men that the feeling was too intense there to suffer an election for officers under the Lecompton constitution to be held in any precinct in that county. The night before the election I organized a company of about thirty armed Free State men under Captain Losee, and towards morning went with them to Kickapoo, a pro-slavery village numbering a few hundred people, eight miles above Leavenworth and directly across the Missouri river from Weston, Missouri, a large town which had contracted the habit of sending its men at every election to swell the pro-slavery vote in Kickapoo. We rode into Kickapoo

at daybreak, and had tied our horses and taken position near the polling place before the voting commenced, intending to see who voted and how many. Our appearance caused great excitement, and threats of violence especially among the Missourians, who came from Weston as fast as the one ferry-boat could bring them. By ten o'clock, we were so overwhelmingly outnumbered that all of our troop had been induced to return to Leavenworth, except only the venerable John C. Vaughan, Wolff, Currier, and myself. We four gave our pistols to our retiring comrades, as more likely to provoke attack on us than to be useful in defence against such numbers. We then took position near the

polling window in a corner made by a projection of the building, where we might be crushed, but from which we could hardly be ejected, and there we stood all day. The voters, generally, made headquarters in several saloons, from which they poured out from time to time, noisy, drunk, armed with two revolvers to the voter—each man voting several times; several gangs voting as often as six times,—threat-

ening us with death if we did not leave for Leavenworth. A friend of mine named Spivey, who was a clerk for General Whitfield, in the Kickapoo land office, and who was a sober and sensible man, acted as an intermediary between the mob and us, warning us most solemnly to leave for Leavenworth, or we would be murdered. I told Spivey, and had him tell the mob, that we would not leave until the polls should close, and that they would not dare to fire on us, because they knew that if they should kill one of us, the Free State people of Leavenworth would burn both Kickapoo and Weston to the subsoil before morning. Just before the polls closed, to mark the end, Mr. Currier and I voted—as we had



Engraved by *Del'Orme.*

ELI THAYER, IN 1885.

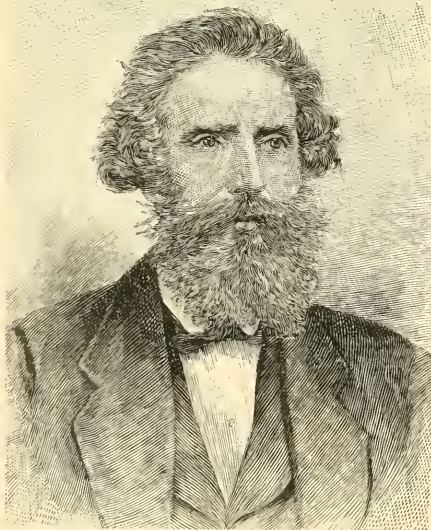
a right to do, being citizens of that county. Our votes were numbered 550 and 551. Only two votes were cast after we voted, when the polls were closed, the total vote being 553. Whereupon, about dark, after having submitted to a good deal of hustling and rough handling, we rode off for Leavenworth in a shower of rotten eggs and pistol shots.

The returns of the election, as provided in the schedule of the constitution, were sent to John Calhoun, at Lecompton, who was surveyor-general of Kansas, and president of the convention. He made and published his official statement of the result in each county, showing the election of the entire pro-slavery State ticket, and a pro-slavery majority in both branches of the legislature. His decision was *prima facie* correct, and beyond review or reversal by any territorial authority. Calhoun forthwith left for Washington to report the result to Buchanan's administration, that it might be officially laid before Congress.

Immediately on this announcement, and solely on my own impulse and initiative, I went to the territorial legislature, which had assembled at Lawrence in regular session, January 4, 1858, and was controlled by the Free State party, and there procured the passage of a law, approved

January 14, 1858, creating a board to investigate and report upon the frauds committed at the election on the adoption of the constitution, December 21, 1857; and also at the election for officers under the constitution, January 4, 1858, and in the returns thereof. Henry J. Adams, J. B. Abbott, Dillon Peckering, E. L. Taylor, H. T. Green, and myself, composed the board. L. A. McLean, who was Surveyor-General Calhoun's chief clerk, was summoned to appear before us as a witness, together with other pro-slavery men employed in the office of the surveyor-general at Lecompton, where the election returns and all the archives relating to the Lecompton constitution had been filed. McLean appeared and swore that Calhoun had taken all the returns relating to the elections under the Lecompton constitution with him to Washington. This struck us as a very improbable story; but McLean stuck to it with a respectfulness, dignity and sincerity of manner which were very impressive. No one could be found to throw a doubt on his statement. We had the surveyor-general's office at Lecompton searched for the returns by our sergeant-at-arms, but not a scrap of them was found. Our investigation, obviously, could amount to nothing without these returns; so, with Calhoun in Washington, and his subordinates swearing that he took the returns with him, we felt utterly baffled and beaten.

At a late hour of the second night after McLean's testimony was given, as I was returning to my room at the Eldridge House, I was accosted in the dark, on a lonely street, by a man whom I did not know, who asked my name, but refused to give his own. He handed me his revolver as an assurance of his pacific intentions, saying that he had been watching on the street for me for several hours. He said he had heard a report of McLean's testimony before our board, and desired to know if it was given as stated. I replied that it was. He said it was a lie, and he could prove it, if it would do any good. He said, however, that he lived at Lecompton, and would in all probability be murdered if he should be known to have informed on McLean and his associates. I satisfied him that if he could and would give me information exposing the falsity



Engraved by G. Krull.

JAMES MONTGOMERY, IN 1858.

of McLean's testimony, his action should not be known, and that with that information, we could drive Calhoun and his gang from the Territory, and defeat the Lecompton constitution.

He then said that late in the night preceding the day when McLean appeared as a witness before our board, he (McLean) had buried a large candle-box under a woodpile adjoining his office, and that he had been seen by Charley Torrey, the janitor, who slept in the building and who told my informant. He then gave me his name as Henry W. Petrikin, and described himself as being a clerk in the office of William Brindle, receiver of the United States land office at Lecompton. This was a voucher for his good faith, for I knew enough of General Brindle to know that he would have no rascals about him.

Next day, aided by my official position as one of the commissioners to investigate the election frauds, I obtained from Josiah Miller, probate judge of Douglas county, (now deceased), a search-warrant directed to Captain Samuel Walker, sheriff of Douglas county (who had already done loyal service to the Free State cause and was eager to do more), commanding him to enter upon and search the premises of the surveyor-general, in Lecompton, and (if practicable) to find, take and bring before Judge Miller all the original returns of elections on or under the Lecompton constitution. Enjoining Judge Miller to secrecy, I then sought Sheriff Walker and requested him to pick out a dozen fighting men well armed, to go with him as a posse, and told him I had a writ for him to execute, and would tell him at day-break next morning where to go and what to do. Captain Walker was on hand punctually, with his trusty squad in a back alley; and after receiving the warrant and

full instructions from me, he set out unobserved from Lawrence for Lecompton, eight miles away. He pounced upon the surveyor-general's premises early in the morning, dug up a buried candle-box from under a great woodpile adjoining the office, and before noon he rode up Massachusetts street, in Lawrence, at the head of his squad, holding the candle-box on the pommel of his saddle.

C. W. Babcock, president of the council; G. W. Dietzler, speaker of the House of Representatives; and J. W. Denver, acting governor, met the Investigating Board in the office of Judge Miller. Sheriff Walker made return of his search-warrant and delivered the candle-box to Judge

Miller, who opened and produced from it all the returns of the election for officers of the Lecompton constitution, which McLean had sworn had been taken by Calhoun to Washington. The Kickapoo returns had swollen to 995, from 553, which was the actual vote (chiefly fraudulent) when the polls closed, there being 442 names added to the list of voters after the names of Currier and Ewing, and after the polls



Engraved by De'Orme.

CHARLES ROBINSON, IN 1858.

closed. Oxford, which had a legitimate vote of about one hundred, had the number increased in the returns, through obvious forgery, to 1266; the returns from Shawnee showed about fifty real voters, to which had been added names—fictitious names, bringing the total up to 729. The fraudulent additions were as apparent on the face of the returns as would be extensions of the legs in a boy's trowsers. They were all on the pro-slavery side; but proving insufficient to effect the desired result, a return from Delaware Crossing, in Leavenworth county, which had been honestly made by the two judges of election, was forged, by splicing with a sheet containing 336 additional names of pro-slavery voters in a

different handwriting and in different ink — these fraudulent votes electing the whole legislative ticket of eleven members from Leavenworth county, and giving both branches of the legislature to the pro-slavery party.

These entire returns showed 6875 votes cast for Free State candidates, and, counting in all the returns, valid and fraudulent, a few hundred more for pro-slavery candidates. On the same day, the fourth of January, 1858, an election was held under a statute then recently passed by the Free State legislature, to take a vote on the adoption or rejection of the Lecompton constitution, at which 10,226 votes were cast against it, and none in its favor. This last-named vote shows the whole strength of the Free State party of Kansas, while the vote of 6875 for Free State candidates under the Lecompton constitution, shows that 3351 Free State men who voted against the Lecompton constitution did not vote for officers under it. In other words, the Free State men who opposed the voting policy were thus shown to comprise only one-third of the Free State party.

Immediately on this exposure (January 28, 1858), I swore out a warrant for the arrest of McLean, for perjury. But as soon as the candle-box had been dug up from the woodpile, he had fled with his fellow-conspirators, never to return to Kansas. I met McLean six years later, when I was in command of our troops at Fort Davidson, adjacent to Pilot Knob, Missouri, ninety miles below St. Louis. He was then chief of staff of General Sterling Price, who was marching on St. Louis at the head of an army of twenty-two thousand men. McLean came to me under a flag of truce, demanding the surrender to Price of the little fort and its garrison of 1060 men, together with its enormous accumulation of quartermaster, commissary and ordnance stores, which were greatly needed by the rebel army. The demand being refused, Price stormed the fort, but was repulsed with great slaughter.

It is but just to McLean to say, that I have a letter from Ely Moore, of Lawrence, dated March 1, 1894, which says that he was living at Lecompton on the twenty-fifth of January, 1858, when the candle-box containing the returns was buried under the woodpile, and that it was done

by another person, whom he names, without McLean's presence or knowledge. And further, that McLean really believed, when he testified before the board, that the returns had been taken by Calhoun to Washington. He says McLean fled the night following the unearthing of the candle-box, because appearances indicated that he had committed perjury, though, in fact, he was innocent of the crime.

The exposure of the frauds struck the Lecomptonites dumb. Every incident was telegraphed and published everywhere. On the day of the exposure, Henry W. Petrikin, who is now living at Montoursville, Pennsylvania, got a brief statement of the facts signed by the presiding officers of the two houses of the legislature, and by Acting-Governor Denver, which statement he carried post-haste to Washington and laid before President Buchanan in presence of Senator Bigler, of Pennsylvania; Senator Dickinson, of New York; General Sam Houston, of Texas; Hon. Allison White, of Pennsylvania; and R. Bruce Petrikin, of Pennsylvania. I followed in a day or two with the report of our board to investigate the election frauds, accompanied by an abstract of the candle-box returns, and a memorial to Congress, all of which I caused to be printed at once and laid on the desk of each member of Congress.

Thereupon, the bill then pending in Congress for the admission of Kansas into the Union, under the Lecompton constitution, dropped dead. A few months afterwards the English bill was forced through Congress by the administration. It provided for the submission of the Lecompton constitution to a free vote of the people of Kansas, and offered them five and a half millions of acres of the public lands for common schools and a university, and five per cent. of all the public lands in the Territory (being about two and a half millions of acres more) for internal improvements — all the grants being conditioned on the acceptance of that constitution by the people. The offer and the constitution were contemptuously rejected on the second of August, 1858, by a vote of 11,300 against the proposition, to 1788 in its favor. Thereupon, the Lecompton constitution was abandoned, and Kansas was

THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM IN KANSAS.



From a photo by
J. J. Hawes, Boston.

Charlestown, Va., 2^d December, 1859.
I John Brown am now quite certain that
the crimes of this guilty land will never be
purged away; but with Blood I had as I now
think: vainly glattered myself that without very
much bloodshed; it might be done

kept out of the Union for more than two years longer to do penance for its devotion to freedom.

The waves which rolled high in Kansas during the political storm of 1855-6-7 extended throughout the Northern States and were long in subsiding. As late as the fall of 1860, the Kansas questions were uppermost for political discussion in every Northern state. On my way through Cincinnati to Lancaster, Ohio, during the political campaign in October, 1859, I was taken to make a speech at a

Republican meeting in Fifth street, Market space, then being addressed by Tom Corwin and Caleb B. Smith. When I reached the stand, Corwin was speaking. He had been discussing only Kansas questions. As I ascended the steps, he turned and greeted me with some pleasant words of recognition, and then branched off on Kansas politics, appealing to me as a witness and a participant. He told with mock gravity of our many governments there; spoke of the Lecompton territorial government, the Topeka provisional govern-

THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM IN KANSAS.

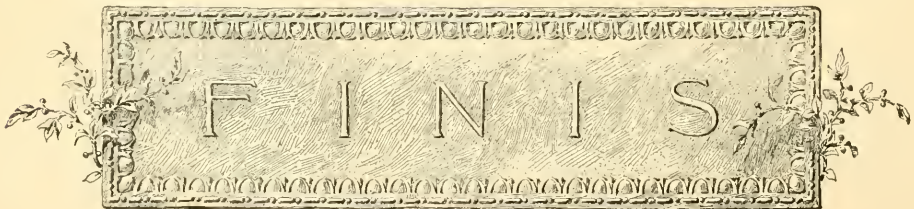
ment, the Leocompton State government, the Topeka State government, and the Leavenworth State government, and described them all as being in full operation, electing State, territorial, county, township, and city officers under each government, and all in full operation at the same time. He said it brought on a general election every month, and a county, city, or township election every other day. He said: "My fellow-citizens: Kind and benignant nature always responds to the wants and habits of men; and I now make the prediction that the next generation in Kansas will be born with ballot-boxes in their bellies, like 'possums; so they can vote whenever they want to!"

Thirty-six years have passed since the Free State struggle in Kansas ended. I have never, until recently, told all of this story to any but my own family. In making it public now, I wish not to seem unmindful of the heroism of the Free State men in the earlier phases of the contest, when many suffered capture, imprisonment and death in the cause; nor of the wisdom and forbearance of Governor Robinson and his associates, and the patriotic resistance to party dictation of Governors Walker, Stanton and Denver, which contributed so much to the happy solution of the controversy. I have written only of the last phase of that protracted struggle, which ended in February, 1858, in the abandonment of all attempt to force slavery on Kansas.

Those brilliant, patriotic and enthusiastic young men of the press—William A. Phillips, lately deceased, who crowned his glorious services for freedom in Kansas, with a service equally glorious in the army; James Redpath, Richard J. Hinton, and their associates, Kegi, Realf, Cook, Tappan, Walden, and others, whose political letters filled all the Republican papers of that day with reports of the struggle for freedom in Kansas—were imbued with John Brown's fervid faith

that slavery would be abolished through a war of the North against the South, brought on by collisions in Kansas between the Free State party and the Federal government. In their correspondence with the Republican newspapers, they wrought up and magnified the incidents of the Kansas struggle in 1855-6-7, when it was a struggle of force and blood; but they were not friendly to the efforts by which the Leocompton constitution was at last peacefully defeated. Hence the final and decisive movements which I have here narrated were ignored or underestimated in the contemporary press, and have been almost overlooked in nearly all the histories of the Kansas struggle.

The importance of that struggle cannot be overestimated. It was the prelude to the War of the Rebellion, and prepared the people to realize its magnitude and to resolve that it should be a fight to the finish. But for this long preparation, it is not improbable that the Rebellion would have ended in a compromise, leaving slavery, though crippled, a lasting cause of bad blood and strife between the sections. Had John Brown's purpose to bring on a war between the sections succeeded, with the South in possession of all the power and prestige of the General government, and the North in rebellion, all the nations of the world would have stood by the South and the General government; while the North would have been divided, overwhelmed and conquered. But there was a higher power which foiled John Brown's mad scheme. The great sweep of events, from the Kansas Nebraska bill to the surrender at Appomattox, was no doubt divinely directed to unify and purify our people for their glorious mission. Whoever bore an honorable part, however humble, on the Northern side in the great struggle, has reason to thank God for having made him an instrument in preserving this beneficent Republic, which is the hope and light of the world.



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